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NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS

Seahawk Logo and Lore Showcased at Naval Hospital Bremerton

BY VJOHNSON – FEBRUARY 3, 2014

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By Douglas H. Stutz, Naval Hospital Bremerton Public Affairs



Naval Hospital Bremerton staff members gathered for an impromptu photo opportunity to collectively show their Seattle Seahawks colors, spirit and support for the Super Bowl on Feb. 2, against the Denver Broncos in front of the command's entrance featuring Northwest Native American art from the Haida nation, of which the Seahawk – or Osprey – is featured in their lore. (Photo by Douglas H Stutz)

The Seahawk was in flight all day Jan. 31, at Naval Hospital Bremerton.

Lea Keyes knew such a day would be forthcoming from the start of the season. Despite several anxious moments she never gave up faith that her team, the Seattle Seahawks, would make it to the Super Bowl.

Nor did a number of other NHB staff members, who gathered for an impromptu photo opportunity on the last work day before the Super Bowl to collectively show their team colors, spirit and support for the upcoming game Feb. 2, against the Denver Broncos.

"It was really fun here to see how many people showed up this morning," said Keyes, medical support assistant for Family Practice and Immunizations Clinic, who tastefully decorated her work area with Seattle Seahawks memorabilia that she attests has been given approval by beneficiaries checking in for their appointments.

"Our guests seem to enjoy the Seahawks display at the desk as they check in. I have not even had any other team fans indicate that it was not a good idea! One of the reasons I decorate my back wall is for conversation starters, and it always seems to be a good point in common that encourages comment and discussion," Keyes said.

The Seattle Seahawks logo design – the eyes, beak and the neck of the Seahawk – was originally introduced in 1975, and has incorporated elements from the Pacific Northwest indigenous Haida and Kwakiutl coastal nations. Along with the Haida eagle and Haida eye, the fiercely-looking Seahawk look also has been influenced by several aspects of Egyptian mythology such as the falcon and eye of Horus.

Although not an exact replica of any specific Haida or Kwakiutl style, the design has won over the fans who now proudly sport the logo and support their team.

"Oh yeah, our logo is definitely the best. It encapsulates all that makes the Puget Sound great, such as the art of the

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- September 2014
- August 2014
- July 2014
- June 2014
- May 2014
- April 2014
- March 2014
- February 2014
- January 2014
- December 2013
- November 2013
- October 2013

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- A LOOK BACK
- FEATURES
- I AM NAVY MEDICINE
- NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS

native culture, the fact we have eagles and Seahawks, and the blue, green, and grey that makes up the natural beauty,” said Keyes.

So, exactly what type of bird is the Seahawk? It’s an osprey, a sizable bird of prey that is valued and respected much as the bald eagle is by the Native American tribes.

In a number of coastal Native American nations throughout the greater Puget Sound region where ospreys are most commonly seen, the birds are revered for their guardian roles in traditional legends. It is said that seeing one is sometimes considered to be a warning of danger to come.

Bronco fans, are you paying attention?

In a purely coincidental note, the osprey’s name is actually derived from the Latin word ossifragus, meaning “a bone breaker.”

Bronco fans, are you still paying attention?
And in Haida lore, the hawk crest is a symbol of a messenger, often from the spirit world with attributes of strength and being farsighted.

Hmm, Bronco fans, notice the theme here?

Even the blue-green color scheme of the Seattle Seahawks is symbolically used in Haida culture.

The Seahawk is also referred to as the Fish-Hawk by the Nez Perce of the Columbia River plateau. They consider the Fish-Hawk a medicine bird, and seeing an osprey in a dream or vision was a sign that a man had been granted spiritual power as a healer.

Additionally, NHB is one setting of the Department of the Navy in the greater Pacific Northwest region that does prominently feature classic symbols of the Haida. There are 58 concrete panels of Haida art symbols, that combine their representation of the Sun, Moon, Beaver, Raven, Copper, Frog, along with Gunarrh and the Whale, and Sea Monster. There are also several featuring the Haida’s symbolic hand design that signify the healing hand of the physician.

The panels were done by Oliver Tiedeman (born April 11, 1919 and died March 23, 1986), a Tacoma, Wash. artist who worked professionally in Nisqually and specialized in Northwest Native American art and associated murals. Tiedeman originally crafted the numerous Native American art symbols for NHB in 1977, ranging from seven feet to 22 feet. He began to work on the project in 1977, took approximately a year to complete and were ready when the facility opened May, 7, 1980.

Just outside the main entrance to the hospital’s Quarterdeck, there are panels of Sun and Moon. Sun was considered brother of the Moon, and Raven (in the lower portion of the Sun panel) was a uniting factor in the Haida mythology. Moon, with Salmon trout design (on the lower portion of the Moon panel) is utilized as a similar design shape. Moon discovered man and sent down arms or rays, pulling him up into the heavens, where man is seen during the full moon. Sun whisked a chief’s daughter up to his arms, where she discovered he was brother to moon and they both bring light to earth, day and night.

Despite the historical relevance of the Seahawk logo with the local Native American culture, for most if not all it does really boil down to the team and the upcoming game.

“I’ve been following the team since before 2006 and was super excited back then. There is a big difference though as we’ve decided to assertively pursue our goal, instead of playing our hearts out and hope for the best. We are far more willing to make things happen through interceptions and turnovers this year. That’s what will win the championship, in my opinion,” said Keyes.

There were a few Denver Bronco fans who also showed up for the group photo opportunity.

“My husband has always been a Bronco fan. I can remember when we were dating we would go watch them when we were at Pensacola and in Maryland. I support him supporting them and the game itself doesn’t really hold my interest but I’ll watch it for the commercials,” said Capt. Iris Boehnke, NHB director of Nursing Services.

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